EPILOGUE

When World War II ended in 1945, Europe lay in ruins; Germany was a conquered enemy; and the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union were uneasy allies. Within a decade, Germany became an ally with the United States, Britain, and France. In the following decades Western Europe, in alliance with the United States, created and maintained a credible defense against Soviet expansion. By 1991 the Warsaw Pact of Eastern European countries dominated by the Soviet Union had collapsed, Germany was reunified, and the Cold War had ended, essentially eliminating the threat of a Soviet invasion into Western Europe. The rationale for stationing American forces in Europe largely disappeared.

From 1945 to 1990 the United States invested more than $5 billion in military construction in Europe, from Norway in the north to Turkey in the east, in support of U.S. forces. This figure does not reflect the changing value of the dollar, and it does not include the German contribution to the support of American forces.[1] It appears unlikely that the United States will ever again maintain as significant a military presence in Europe. This study of nearly half a century of military construction in Europe serves to record both the achievements of the past and some key lessons learned.

Appreciating Sovereignty

Time and again the United States confronted the reality that in peacetime the U.S. military operates overseas with allies who are sovereign. France, having been battered severely by war, jealously guarded her sovereignty. Despite having joined NATO in 1949, the French were unwilling to cede control over U.S. military construction on their soil in the 1950s. Germany, defeated in World War II and occupied in the 1940s, resumed its sovereign status when the new government was established. Not unexpectedly, the Germans asserted increasing control over military construction within their borders. In 1988 Allan Aaron, division counsel at the Europe Division in Frankfurt, articulated the American position in Europe:

> We are guests.… Sometimes we are guests of necessity. Sometimes we are honored guests. Sometimes the honored guest gets to be a little bit stale. And sometimes the necessity that brought the guest in the first place goes away. We have to be sensitive to these political nuances.… We are dealing with a sovereign. We don't have rights—we have privileges.[2]

One manifestation of sovereignty is indirect contracting. Personnel in the Department of Defense, in the Department of the Army, and at Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, were slow to grasp the impact of indirect contracting. Over five decades, international agreements rather than standard Corps of Engineers procedures increasingly came to govern contracting for U.S. military construction. From the 1950s to the 1980s Army engineers in Europe had to explain indirect contracting to first-time visitors from Washington. Even at the end of the 1980s, indirect contracting remained the aspect of command in the Europe Division for which the incoming commander felt least prepared.[3]

Indirect contracting increased the cost of design and construction, because monitoring required more time and more personnel. There were other cost factors over which Army engineers in Europe could exert no control, including the higher costs of benefits for local national and third-country employees and the need to employ negotiators and translators. Sometimes congressional mandates, such as the requirement to use expensive and inefficient American coal in German boilers, further increased construction costs overseas.

Recognizing Cultural Differences

Differences in culture and business practices between Americans and Europeans strained relationships, led to administrative errors, and created conflicts. Interpersonal and interagency misunderstandings resulted from strictures prohibiting U.S. government personnel from accepting gifts. In most European countries and in other parts of the world, it is an accepted practice for contractors to present holiday gifts to clients and business associates. Contractors were insulted when American colleagues returned their gifts. The *Richtfest* is a traditional party that Germans hold to celebrate completion of the skeleton of a building, but Americans were told that they could not partake in the food and drink that the contractor provided to honor the workers. In Turkey, construction workers balked when The United States Engineer Group assigned a woman as project engineer. Environmental laws in Germany had an impact on both design and construction, as well as on military training. The examples of clashing cultural values are numerous, and they point to the need for sensitivity, understanding, and respect for others' customs.

An Absence of Scandal

Considering the billions of dollars spent on construction, executed through thousands of contracts with hundreds of companies over the course of forty-five years, the documentary records contain few incidents of fraud or abuse, particularly after the mid-1950s when contract construction was centralized and the German political structure and economy stabilized. There were instances of misconduct—irregular procurements, overcharges and substitution of inferior materials by contractors, and fil-

ing of improper travel vouchers by employees—but the irregularities were minor when weighed against the number of projects and the total amount of money spent.

Continuity amid Change

The Army engineers in Europe supported the Army and the Air Force in the face of political changes in the United States and in Europe and through shifts in U.S. military strategy. They continued to work as the demand for engineering services fluctuated and as organizational structures changed. They adjusted to external events and pressures, from Soviet saber-rattling to new weapons systems, changing construction standards, and budgetary restraints emanating from the U.S. Congress.

Despite numerous changes from 1945 to 1991, there was continuity. Many of the places that were the focus of engineer activity in the late 1940s continued as focal points of engineer effort through five decades; names such as Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Heidelberg, and Rhine-Main Air Base, recur year after year in the records of engineer activities. American civilians such as Lou Brettschneider, William Camblor, and Herb Wooten and local workers including Hasso Damm provided continuity. Their careers mirrored and were shaped by the evolving mission of the U.S. forces in Europe.

The Legacy

The Army engineers who managed and executed U.S. military construction in Europe after World War II were asked to carry out their mission in difficult circumstances, where time was short, money was inadequate (except for a few years in the mid-1980s), and personnel were scarce. Military and civilian, Americans and local nationals, the Army engineers demonstrated commitment and an awareness that their efforts contributed to a larger cause. Individually and collectively, they saw themselves as a part of the Atlantic alliance's common defense; they knew that they were on the potential firing line in the Cold War.

What is the legacy of almost five decades of the American military presence in Europe, particularly in Germany—former enemy, then ally? The bricks and mortar of renovation and new construction is one legacy of Army engineer activity. Entire installations have been turned over to—or returned to—the governments of the countries in which they were located. French families in a housing development outside Orleans, France, appreciate the floors that are warmed by the conduit ducts for the district heating system. Refugees from Eastern Europe enjoy housing in Germany that was constructed for American military families.

Another legacy of the U.S. military presence is manifest in the lives of German nationals like Helga Preuss Butschan and Hartwig Braun. Helga was eighteen years old in the spring of 1945 when she fled East Prussia with her father, mother, brother, sister, and grandmother. When the fam-

ily arrived at Osterholz-Scharmbeck near Bremen, they were sent to a refugee camp. She recalled:

> It was hard for us at first. Nothing to eat. My father didn't have a job; nobody had a job so we had to live from what the government gave us. In 1946 I started working for the Americans because we got a meal there.… I only ate part of it and the rest I brought home.… It was my intention [to work] only for a few months.[4]

In fact, she worked for the U.S. Army in Europe almost continuously until she retired in 1987.

Hartwig Braun was a student in a military boarding school for Aryan elite during World War II. Near the end of the war seventeen-year-old Braun was sent to the Russian front, where he became a prisoner of war. He escaped back to Germany but was held for three years as a prisoner of war in the French zone. As a prisoner he began training as a mason; after his release he completed an engineering degree and worked briefly for a German construction company. In February 1952 he accepted a job as project engineer with the U.S. Army at Ramstein Air Base. Interviewed at the Europe Division's Kaiserslautern Area Office in June 1990, he contemplated his approaching retirement after almost forty years with the U.S. Army in Europe:

> When I go out I can say it was nice from the first moment to the last with *real* hard work in between.… Work I was not even asked to do I did because I was happy to do it. That is what I call a worked life, with foreign people like former war enemies, then growing together and later on friends to a point where I can say I worked better for the American people than I would have worked for my own house at home. Because they gave me so much by being friendly, by being open and telling their needs—and human relations were developed.[5]

Listening to Hartwig Braun, Helga Butschan, or scores of others describe their personal experiences as employees of the U.S. Army in Germany makes clear anecdotally the profound professional and emotional impact of the American military presence.

In October 1990 Brig. Gen. Ernest J. Harrell, the last commander of the Europe Division, presided over a tree-planting ceremony. The ceremony took place at the rear of the Phillips Building on the grounds of the I.G. Farben property in Frankfurt, Germany, from which Army engineers had operated since July 1945. The occasion was the dedication of an employee patio, but General Harrell asserted that the tree represented a great deal more than one construction project. The plaque at the base of the tree read:

> This tree was planted to commemorate the dedicated work of the military and civilian personnel—American, German, and third-country nationals—of the U.S. Army Engineer Division, Europe (EUD). May

it grow and flourish in an era of peace their devoted efforts have helped make possible.[6]

A few years after this ceremony, the United States returned the former I.G. Farben property to the city of Frankfurt, which converted it into a university campus. In the early years of the twenty-first century the former Phillips Building sat empty, abandoned, and surrounded by weeds, an ironic tribute to the success of the Army engineers. The generation of Helga Butschan and Hartwig Braun is passing. The investment of time, money, and energy contributed by the Army engineers—military, civilian, and local national—remains as part of the legacy of the peaceful triumph of Western democracy that helped sustain more than a half-century of peace in Europe. This story is worth remembering.